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ABSTRACT

This article briefly describes the function and features of the Smith Circular Learning Station used in Chattanooga, Tennessee's Head Start and Follow Through program. The stations are used in place of traditional rows of classroom desks. Each station consists of a mobile worktable and a set of stackable chairs. Children are allowed to move about freely, and to participate in a number of learning activities. The worktables allow greater flexibility in the classroom, are inexpensive to build, are equipped with a self-contained extension cord and jack, are easy to fold, and save space. The article also includes a list of building materials for the worktable, and construction plan and dimensions. (JF)

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Worktable on Wheels

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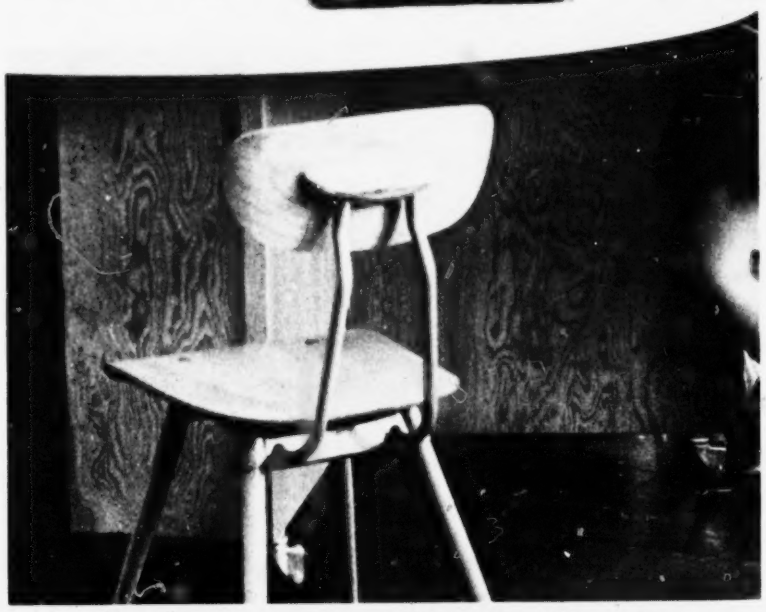

Teachers in Chattanooga, Tennessee's Head Start and Follow Through program plan their children's class experiences around a "learning center" concept. In each classroom, traditional rows of desks have been replaced by stackable chairs and mobile worktables. The children move about freely, selecting from a number of learning activities. As the children develop self-confidence and responsibility, the teachers given them an increasingly large share in determining the use of the tables of display, pre-reading experiences, art activities, or snacks. Dr. William F. Smith, Coordinator of Research and Development of the Chattanooga schools, designed the unique worktable on wheels, known as the Smith Circular Learning Station. Several features of the learning station make it particularly adaptable to the program's requirements.

It permits a great degree of flexibility in the classroom. This is important in a classroom program which stresses independent learning and encourages the children to learn to try out different things in their environment and to find answers for themselves. The worktable is large enough to allow a group to work around it and provides ample space for working with clay, crafts or displays.

It costs little to build. Mr. Smith figures that the total cost of the table is approximately $35.00, including materials and time. A comparative commercially produced table, if one were available, might cost about $150.00. The worktable is not complicated to build; an amateur builder or the school's shop section should have little trouble putting it together.

It is a space-saver in the classroom. It can be quickly and easily rolled out of the way to make room for large group activities. When the leaves are folded down and the table is pushed against the wall, the table becomes bookcase size. This feature is a big plus value in small-sized classrooms or in schools where storage space is minimal.

It is equipped with a self-contained extension cord and jack so that record players, tape recorders, projectors, and other audio-visual aids can be used conveniently right at the table.

It is easy to fold. First graders can manage the job with ease and thereby gain a feeling of accomplishment.

Because the learning station can be built for children of various ages, the plans do not specify a height.

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Materials:

Lumber-regular plywood, 3/4 inch thick for the table top, 3/4 inch plywood is recommended for the base of the table but other weights could be used. Light wood for reinforcing corners and joints (optional).

Formica-enough is needed to cover the top of the table, a 48" circle. It will be glued to the plywood.

Hardware-4 casters (swivel, equipped with locks to prevent the table from moving) 4 continuous hinges (2 hinges 4" long, 2 hinges 2" long). Electrical cord three feet long. Electrical outlet and plug. Wedge door stop. Nails or screws for assembling table. Hook locks (2) to hold doors shut (optional). Hook locks (2) to hold doors open (optional). Bracket to wrap extra cord around. Glue (contact bond cement).

"SMITH CIRCULAR LEARNING STATION"